

Primary Point



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PRIMARY POINT®
Kwan Um School of Zen

2018 Summer Kyol Che at Musangsa



*"Inside work is keeping clear mind,
Outside work is cutting off selfish desires and helping others."
- From the Temple Rules by Zen Master Seung Sahn*

Experience a new style of Summer Kyol Che in 2018

Summer Kyol Che 2018 at Musangsa is on a new schedule that includes formal practice, working, hiking, together action and experiencing Zen temple life. The first 2 months will be a modified practice and work retreat and the last month will be a full practice schedule. It's a unique opportunity to benefit from practicing together with monks, nuns, international practitioners, and receiving regular teaching from the guiding teachers. Kyol Che at Musangsa can be a valuable experience in making a foundation for Zen practice when returning to your respective home countries.

Entry dates

May 27 (SUN) Start of Summer Kyol Che - new schedule
June 9th (SAT), June 23rd (SAT)
July 7th (SAT), 21st (SAT),
July 27th (FRI) First entry - for full sitting schedule
August 4th (SAT), 11th (SAT), 18th (SAT)

Guiding Teachers

Zen Master Dae Bong
Hye Tong Sunim JDPS
Guest Teachers from the KUSZ



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Summer Kyol Che

July 7, 2018 through August 3, 2018

Stays of 3 days to 4 weeks. Entries and Exits on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 2,100 copies.

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Cover: Kwan Seum Bosal at the Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery in Sha Tin, Hong Kong. Photo by Nick Gershberg.

Green Dharma

► How Is the World Changing?

Jan Sendzimir

From a talk given at Providence Zen Center during the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference on October 9, 2017.



Photo: Allan Matthews

The idea to use green dharma as a theme for this conference grew out of Zen Master Ji Haeng's (Thom Pastor's) concern that the Kwan Um School ought to address the common feelings of confusion and dread emerging from unprecedented global change. The whole team behind the Whole World Is a Single Flower is grateful to Thom for his inspiration and his trust in us to carry this idea forward. We found these feelings of confusion and apprehension in sanghas all over the world as we interviewed them to prepare for this conference. Change is happening in ways no one has ever seen, both in nature and in society. Our practice is centered on letting go of the *need* to understand and to know. But then how do we go forward in such totally new territory?

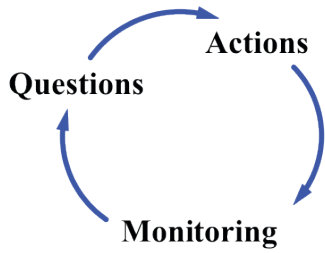
Green dharma may sound like something new, but actually it follows an approach our school has used for four decades. For all the many faiths and directions that our guests bring with them, we open the door to the same question: What am I? *Don't know*. The details of any particular path were unimportant. Sharing don't know is. We can forget about the color of our various robes and cushions, and share a vast silence.

The confusion arising from great change now drives many people to really question the world, even scientists whose reputations are based on knowing. Actually, such confusion is not new. The complex mystery that everyone now sees emerging was already surprising and humiliating scientists more than fifty years ago. Ecosystems (lakes, grasslands, forests, coral reefs) that had seemed calm and stable for centuries could almost overnight suddenly flip into degraded states and resist all attempts at recovery. Sudden, drastic change that appeared irreversible would resist explanation or solution despite decades of intense research. However, all these disasters share one common initial cause: the first actions that eventually set up the disaster emerged from a sense of certainty. We were confident of our knowledge, certain of what worked and arrogantly pushed it through despite all evidence. So how do we move beyond certainty?

Science, like our Zen practice, starts with questions, but immediate successes can turn eventually to disaster if the science only strengthens certainty. Scientists realized that they had to learn to unlearn. They had to keep a mind that was much more open. That effort to open up prompted their attempts to expand their don't-know mind. For natural scientists like me, that meant decades learning to listen to, talk to and work with a much wider circle: engineers, social scientists and others even outside the sciences such as politicians (from presidents to local mayors), farmers, fishermen, hunters, shepherds. Without knowing science, many of these people had better questions and insights than scientists, and good questions were proving much more valuable than answers in a world changing so fast that solutions rarely worked for long.

So how have ecologists tried to keep an open mind in helping people engage uncertainty that threatened their communities and landscapes? They had to build trust by humbly admitting that they do not have the answer (No one has the answer, actually.) and then listening and inviting everyone to admit no one knows. In this way they extended their don't know to the entire community as they tried to deal with mysterious change. Ignorance is no excuse for running away from our responsibility to help others and manage our communities, so we have to learn as we go along. Keeping don't know is how we stay open and flexible, adapting to changes in the climate and society. On that basis everyone (not just the specialists and the scientists) could agree on what kind of change is really important to address and how to address it. The easiest way for everyone to agree on what critical change is important is to define it as a trend, like rising unemployment or falling water quality. Then we can look at how this trend

arose and what causes combined to create this troubling change. Based on our agreement on those causes, we can agree on what we want to do about it.



An Adaptive Learning Cycle

The diagram shows an example of a learning cycle that helps us adapt. That is one way a community can work together in the spirit of don't know to define what trends of change are important and what can we do about them. Notice the circle does not rely on *solutions* or *answers*. Those may occur along the way, but they rarely last long. The cycle focuses on sustaining the questioning, staying open to how we need to change our questions and our practice to evolve with a changing world. This cycle is the model for our 2017 conference. I am a scientist and we have brought other professionals here *not* to tell you what the problems are or what to do about it. It is our job to help you work together and agree on what trends are critical and how we might engage change. We will offer our experience and ideas to stimulate your discussion, hoping you will move far beyond our initial ideas to those that resonate deeply with you and your communities.

The don't know of Zen or of science: same or different? There is a wider, more promising question: if scientists and Zen practitioners both reach for the openness of don't

know, then how can we work together? Centuries of Zen practice can contribute to anyone's efforts to be open to the mystery of a complex, changing world. This is a possible entry point for Zen practitioners who seek to help others in engaging change and uncertainty.

Such a partnership becomes especially important in an era where many people do not know how to question with an open mind. Confusion and anxiety have channeled frustration and rage into an unhealthy skepticism that scorches everything without responsibility to work together for all beings. It masquerades as questioning to hide a judgmental bias fueled by fear. This skepticism has torched all the institutions that have held our communities together: churches, public schools, local and national government. In this void we navigate without any rudder, for no one can agree on where to take our questions to find the truth. Science, journalism, religions—everything is suspect and therefore rejected as useless, or worse, deceitful. Where there is no bedrock to build on, no place to test ideas. We are reduced to slogans based on unfounded and untested "certainties." What is needed is questioning that points us toward where to test ideas to build a future.

Zen admonishes us that our practice is not complete without *direction*: How can I help you? To partner with science in developing a healthy questioning channeled by our common direction is one way we can help everyone to face great change. Together we can courageously admit our ignorance and make our openness available for all beings by experimenting and learning how to live in a changing world.

Jan Sendzimir is a senior dharma teacher and abbot of the Vienna Zen Center. He has practiced Zen with the Kwan Um School since 1974. He teaches ecology and citizen science in Europe, America and Africa in the search for ways that Zen practice, science and politics can support those who engage a changing and unpredictable world.

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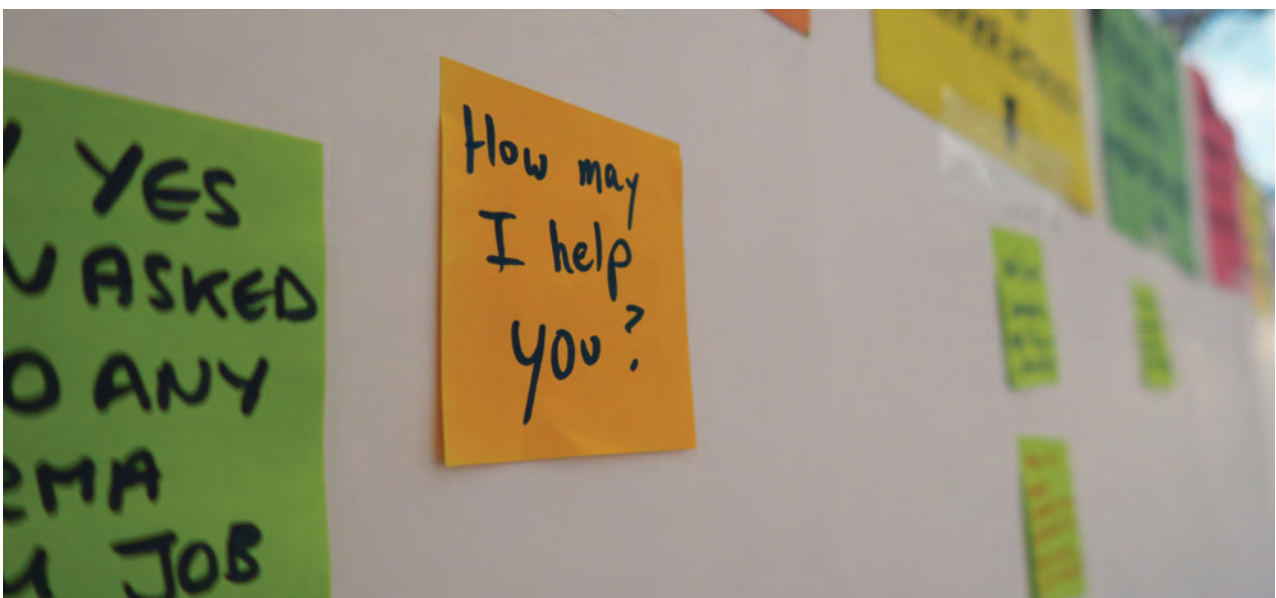


Photo: Francis Lau



Photo: Allan Matthews

► **Indra's Net: Making Connections among Constant Change**

Claudia Schippert

From a talk given at Providence Zen Center during the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference on October 9, 2017

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Common reactions to learning about the many aspects of the global ecological crisis are frustration, hopelessness, uncertainty and fear. But we also have important teachings about the many connections that define our lives.

Indra's net is a metaphor from Buddhist philosophy. It was originally developed in the Avatamsaka Sutra and later became important in the Huayan school. The story goes that Indra, the great cosmic force, has created an infinite net that stretches across the entire universe. At each intersection, at each knot of the net, hangs a multifaceted polished jewel that reflects all the other jewels in the net—and they, in turn, reflect all the other jewels, infinitely stretching over the entire universe. Indra's net is a metaphor for the interconnectedness of the universe.

Another example that illustrates interconnection is the theory of "six degrees of separation." It is the idea that all living things and everything else in the world are six (or fewer) steps away from each other. A chain of "a friend of a friend" statements can be made to connect any two people in a maximum of six steps.

If we were to play this game right now, within just a few minutes, we'd see that we are connected through other people, in different places, sometimes across times. We will make more connections at this conference that again connect us to people who have their own networks and connections that they bring with them. So our connections grow and shift as our actions affect everything around us. Some of the intersecting threads that make up the ever more complex network in which we all exist include: people in different locations; food and resources we get from all kinds of places; information and technology; language, art and culture; and of course money and vari-

ous modes of production and exchange.

Living in globalization means it's a small world! Today we are connected to more people across the world than ever before. Just compare your life to your grandparents' lives. You probably travel more (and thus use more resources, meet more people, see more and different cultures), live longer, have a different work life and get food and entertainment in ways that are less local and more connected to other lives across the globe.

If we imagine the networks we live in as a big interconnected net, what happens when we pull a bit stronger on one string or let go of another? How does shifting one part of the web affect us socially, culturally, politically with our communities? Let's investigate this through the lens of a concrete example, what scholars and activists refer to as environmental racism or environmental (in)justice.

We all know that human beings use too many resources in unsustainable ways. We take too much for ourselves and we produce too much harm, trash and destruction. If we keep this up, the system cannot be sustained. Importantly, the *cost* of what we are doing to the planet is not being paid equally. People who analyze environmental racism study policies and practices through which less powerful groups are placed in more dangerous environmental situations such as increased pollution, safety hazards and other risks. Here is an example: If I only look at what is happening in my neighborhood, I may not know that other neighborhoods get their water from bad pipes or live next to landfills or large trash piles—which also contain *my* trash—filled with toxins that contaminate the earth and the water. Pollution and other effects of our "civilized," "modern" lifestyles (especially in highly industrialized nations) often affect parts of the world's population that we don't know so well or that live *somewhere else*. For those who are affected, it can become "normal" to live with the worsening situations and pollution.

Most of us could point to many examples where governments have ignored existing problems. But it is not just governments. For many of us, part of our privilege is that we can choose to live our life in a way that ignores and doesn't encounter the realities of lives that we nonetheless influence. Much of it will come back to us, of course, because all of us are interconnected. But in some respects, many of us remain fairly oblivious to how we all influence each other.

If we think back to the metaphor of the net, we tend to understand that pulling on one string will have an effect on the many other connected knots and strings. But how exactly the net changes is difficult to predict, because the knots of interconnectedness create unforeseen shifts and changes. Similarly, one source of uncertainty for many people is that we do not always know how exactly our action will affect the world around us. Or how those effects will influence the world, or what the next effect of all that might be. This principle can be observed in all ecological

networks (including the social and political ones): while all actions have consequences, they also have many *unintended* consequences.

Here is another example, to illustrate the *unintended* consequences of actions: We know that it is a good idea to conserve resources and recycle plastic rather than produce more and more new stuff. But even recycling is complicated. It may seem like a good idea to recycle the plastic water bottle, but often, recycled plastic from rich countries is shipped to poorer countries, where it is processed, sometimes burned, and affects the people who live there. Currently, China is the world leader in processing recycled plastic. In fact, for a long time, lots of American plastic was (and some still is) shipped to China where people in many small businesses and some big factories sort and process it into reusable plastic resin. This is environmentally dangerous work, often without protective gear, so workers inhale the fumes and handle chemicals without gloves. As a result, entire communities breathe the polluted air or drink the contaminated water and the children grow up with respiratory illness and severe health problems.

Interestingly, however, burning recycled plastic from America in places such as China affects not only those in China, but it also ends up affecting the Americans who sent the plastic to China in the first place. For example, California has cleaned up some of its air through better regulations, but the increased air pollution in countries like China is so strong that it actually reaches California, erasing most of the gains in fighting smog.

It is difficult to say who *causes* the bad air, since it is the end result of many interconnected actions. We cannot really point to one individual or group that is responsible, because so many connected people and actions are part of producing it. It does become clear that even the best of intentions can become part of actions that have unintended (and at times undesirable) consequences.

This ironic cycle can plunge us into don't know, because confusion results when the responsibility is shared everywhere but unequally.

So what can be done? The serious problems in our current world cannot be solved by one person or one group of researchers. In order to develop sustainability in many different realms, we need to work together across many differences, drawing on many areas of expertise to work in teams. For researchers—and everyone else who is actively engaging their community—this teamwork requires new ways of doing things. Sometimes it requires going outside of our comfort zone, learning new skills and applying them with wisdom and creativity. Creativity, unconventional perspectives or new practical methods for engaging a situation—all these are necessary, but fully embracing the creativity and openness of this don't know is hard, as we have less and less of it as we get older and more caught in our social, political and behavioral patterns.



Photo: Allan Matthews

Facing the at times unpredictable effects our actions and interactions create highlights the importance of practicing don't know. Genuinely cultivating don't know can help us keep the mind open to recognize when and where new ideas, maybe unconventional or seemingly odd ideas and solutions, can help us gain insight and positively engage the interconnected web in which we live—and in which, just like Indra's net, we function as reflections of each other.

Claudia Schippert has practiced with the Kwan Um School for more than 15 years, currently serves as abbot of the Orlando Zen Center and is an associate professor of humanities at the University of Central Florida.

► Like a Fish in Water: Five Ways Buddhist Sanghas Can Recognize the Societal Systems They Are Part of and Help to Make Them Just

Colin Beavan

From a talk given at Providence Zen Center during the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference on October 13, 2017

All over the world, people are faced with the same kong-an about our suffering world. Everywhere people ask this question: Is there any hope, or is it game over? Or, why are some people in denial about climate change? Or why don't the politicians do something?

In fact, the other day I went into an interview with a kong-an teacher and he said, "Do you have any questions?" I said, "Yes, I have a kong-an for you. The world is falling apart. Why don't the politicians do something?" When he answered, he said, "*Oh, the politicians, oh, the politicians . . .*" and he shook his head and looked very sad. Then he lifted his head and he looked straight in my eyes and said, "How can I help?" Then he went back to what he was doing before: "Oh, the politicians . . ."

I like that answer because of course we're all grumbling and scared and worried, but, even when we have that, our

vow must rise to the top: how can I help? And I think for us as a sangha there might be an even better question. For us as a world, there's a better question. Instead of "How can I help?" maybe the question should also be "How can we help?"

With this article, I wanted to try to give us clear steps that we could follow to go beyond just knowing about climate change and environmental degradation—in fact, knowing about any sort of social injustice—to actually doing something. It is a five-step method.

1. Choose an Issue of Injustice

So the first question is to choose an issue that we care about. It could be climate change, it might be air quality, it could be water quality, it could be racism, it could be women's rights. What is an issue that your sangha particularly cares about? What is the consensus within the sangha? There could be more than one issue, but sometimes it is easier to concentrate on one issue, at least at first, especially if your sangha wants to design a program of study and action. But of course, a sangha can also choose to take action on one issue for now and then move on to another issue in the future. This way, we can honor the many concerns held by our individual sangha members.

2. Examine the Systems That Cause the Injustice

There is a story of a fish. It lives in water all day long and has always lived in water. It was born in water. Water is everywhere to the point that the fish doesn't ever think about the water. So one day, someone comes along and asks, "How's the water?" The fish looks surprised and says, "What water?" It has lived in water so long it doesn't even realize. That is like the societal systems we live in. We have been living in the same systems all of our lives to the point that we don't even realize things could be different.

So the first thing to do is to interrogate the systems. What's actually going into the issue at hand? For example, in the case of children who have asthma in the area of New York City, where all the garbage trucks take the trash—one of the issues I care about—there's the problem of the creation of so much trash. We have a culture of using single-use items like plastic water bottles, for example. Our national government should be regulating water quality so that we don't even need water bottles. We have air quality regulations that should say something about the trucks driving through the neighborhood. And we have the bottled water companies themselves.

The point is to interrogate: What are all the systems that contribute to the problem that I see? What can we do to make those systems visible, so we're not like the fish, asking, "What water?"

Obviously, there are ways to apply pressure to each of those systems. A common question that stops people in their tracks is, "which is the best?" What is the best work to do?

But maybe we can never know. We don't know which

way of acting is going to fix things the best because there are so many problems coming from so many sources. So there are actually solutions that seem mutually contradictory, but when added together will work tougher. So when it comes to arriving at solutions, nobody is really wrong. We need all of the solutions. And if we stop and wait until we figure out which solution will work, we'll be permanently stopped.

So, just do it!

3. Understand Why Spiritual Practitioners Are Important in Social Change

It's sometimes said that civic engagement, politics and religion or spirituality should all be separate. And yet some of our best, most effective civic leaders have been spiritual leaders also. For example, Vandana Shiva is a Hindu food justice leader in India. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. led the civil rights movement. Lucretia Mott was a Quaker abolitionist in the United States and a women's rights leader. Father Brent Hawkes is a priest and gay rights activist. Ingrid Mattson is a Muslim activist out of London. Rabbi Sharon Kleinman works in gay rights, and Reverend Sally Bingham is head of Interfaith Power and Light, the Christian climate organization. The list of past and present spiritual activists goes on and on: Mahatma Gandhi, Desmond Tutu, Maha Ghosananda, Thich Nhat Hanh.

There is a photograph I like of a meditator at a political protest being handcuffed while he sits in the lotus position. It's kind of shocking. The fact that the meditator is being arrested says something more than if we just saw somebody else being arrested by the police. There seems something even more unjust about a meditator being arrested.

This points to the idea that a spiritual practitioner has some particular weight when he or she becomes part of a justice movement. Of course, when any of us show up at a march or any social change event, we're just another body. That counts. We're just one more person who's there and that counts. But if we're spiritual teachers or leaders, we are perceived to have a certain moral authority. I'm not saying we do have it, but people assume we have it, and that adds weight to the cause we're working on. Also, many of us are community leaders. So that means if we choose to become involved then other people will follow us and also become involved.

Also, we have an orientation toward nonviolence. I'll tell you that many of the activists I encounter are so filled with fear and stress from doing this work for so long that nonviolence comes hard to them. They need people who are centered and clear to help in that way.

We have tools of resiliency to offer. So one of the things that I think a lot about is actually being a chaplain to communities of change. You don't even actually have to go to the march, but you go to meetings and offer some

spiritual succor. In this way we can use the tools of our wisdom inquiry to help activists not burn out.

Spiritual people are perceived to have disdain for the worldly. So if we show up somewhere, that must mean it's really important, because we supposedly don't get involved in worldly things unless they're important.

4. Learn from Other Buddhists and Spiritual Communities

A lot of other Buddhist sanghas are moving ahead on issues of social change, both within their sanghas and in the work they're doing in the world. We can learn from that. They're just a phone call away. For example, the Brooklyn Zen Center is headed up by a man named Greg Snyder, who recently got transmission in the Soto Zen lineage. Prominent on their website are discussions of their commitment to inclusivity and their work to combat racism within their own sangha.

They've done some interesting work around governance. Greg said he doesn't believe that his sangha will become diverse until its leadership becomes diverse. Sangha leadership rises up as they've practiced for a long time. So how does the sangha leadership become diverse without diverse membership?

Greg has separated the role of abbot from that of teacher. Instead of an abbot they have a diverse board of directors selected from the community. Meanwhile the teachers still rise up the ranks the way they always have, by dharma transmission. So he's done a good job at it.

Another sangha, the Insight Meditation Society, is also working to come up with a handbook and ways of instruction for all of their various sanghas around the country.

At the People's Climate March there was a gigantic contingent of Buddhists. One of them was a woman who's part of the Insight community named Regina Valdez, who started an organization she calls Compassion NYC. She has three buses and has rolling retreats, with a teacher on each bus. This rolling retreat traveled down to DC to participate in the People's Climate March, which, by the way, was the biggest climate march in history. There we were, Buddhists from all sorts of different sanghas.

But Regina is just a sangha member. She's not a teacher. She's a member of the Insight Meditation Society and she decided to put this together and then reached out to other sanghas. So it doesn't have to be a teacher who leads a sangha in this work.

5. Do Together Action

Somewhere in the teaching letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn, the founder of our tradition, I found this and I really like it: The student asked Zen Master Seung Sahn, how do we help people? The Zen master replied, "First, do together action."

This story reminds me of something that Kathy Park JDPSN said: with a low-class Zen master, the students follow the Zen master. With a high-class Zen master, the

Zen master follows the students. So to get involved in climate justice and do together action, we just find the people who are already doing climate justice and follow them. We don't have to figure out what to do, or how our sangha can contribute; we just have to join in.

Here is one simple way to do together action. Outside the temple, meet people in other organizations who care about what you care about and who know more about it than you do. Go and join in with that organization and learn with them, learn from them. Then lend support to their efforts. We don't have to organize our own climate march: we just have to go to somebody else's climate march. Then, finally, if it's appropriate and they're interested, we can also invite them to come back to our temple.

It's not just marches and activism that we can participate in when it comes to social change. There are things like community gardens, or beach clean-ups, or canvassing and talking to your neighbors about various issues, or joining in on community discussions. There are all sorts of things to do, and which thing you and your sangha might find just depends on what you and your sangha might enjoy doing. There are lots of people already organizing these things, and all it takes to join is to look them up online. And then doing together action.

So, in short, as a model for engaged Buddhism: One, choose an issue you care about. Two, try to understand the systems that are contributing to that problem. Three, understand that as spiritual practitioners we have a special role to play in this kind of work. Four, learn from other Buddhist sanghas. Five, just start with together action.

Colin Beavan, PhD, attracted international attention for his yearlong lifestyle-redesign project and the wildly popular book about it, *No Impact Man*, which also inspired the Sundance-selected documentary film of the same name. Colin ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in New York's 8th Congressional District in 2012. A sought-after speaker, coach and consultant, he founded the No Impact Project; serves on the board of Transportation Alternatives; is a member of the advisory council of 350.org; teaches at Sarah Lawrence College; and is a senior dharma teacher in the Kwan Um School of Zen. He is the author, most recently, of *How to Be Alive: A Guide to the Kind of Happiness That Helps the World*.

Photo: Francis Lau



Don't-Know Army

Excerpts from a panel on monastic life given at Providence Zen Center during the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference on October 10, 2017

Well Yeah, What's the Big Deal?

Kwan Haeng Sunim

Before I took my novice precepts, Zen Master Seung Sahn told me, "If you have big desire, you have a big problem. If you have medium desire, you have a medium problem. If you have no desire, you have no problem." So for me, I haven't reached the no-desire part, but I'm always headed in that direction. What's interesting is that it's the same for all people: families, husbands, wives—same deal. If you have a big-desire mind, you have big problems. So practice deals with that.



Photo: Allan Matthews

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But also now I'm a monastic. I'm living here in America; it's a lot different than when I was in Korea. In Korea, I lived in a cloistered society. For instance, I went to a temple in Pusan, and at one point I talked to a lady. When I went back to my temple, they said, "We saw you talking to that lady." "Well, yeah, what's the big deal?" That was interesting to me. That's how it is. That was the most extreme thing that happened to me like that there, but for the most part, we're kind of cloistered. When laypeople come and meet us, there's a buffer that comes between us.

And then I came here to America, where there's no buffer. In the room right across from me, there might be a layperson of either sex. That's how it is here, and I had to get used to that. I think it did take the entire ten years that Zen Master Seung Sahn had mentioned, of living with monastics, so that I could get comfortable. You gen-

erally don't just start out as a layperson in America, ordain in America and live in America as a monk, because basically all you've done is change your clothes. Though there have been one or two monks who have done that in America, it's not an easy thing to do.

It took me living in Korea around monks and nuns to learn how to behave as a monk. It's really a behavioral thing. I would look and watch how they behaved until it became natural for me to behave as they did around other people. When I came back here to America, it was OK. It wasn't such a big deal. I understood how to act around women and around people that are overly friendly, and so on. By learning it in Korea, you learn to do it with your monastic family. And you're with your whole family, monks and nuns, all the time. You all go out to a movie, for instance, and at the movie, situations may appear. But you watch how the older monks and nuns act, and you learn that way. That's how a lot of it was. When I came back here to America, much of it wasn't really conscious; I'm just used to it. I just slide into that role. But you have to love what you're doing, and I do really enjoy what I'm doing.

Kwan Haeng Sunim met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1986 at Cambridge Zen Center. In 1997 he went to Korea and 1999 ordained as a novice monk at Jik Ji Sa Temple. In 2003 he became a full monk, or bhikkhu, at Tong Do Sa Temple. He continued to live and practice in Korea at Mu Sang Sa and Hwa Gye Sa temples until 2012, when he returned to the United States and continued practicing at Providence Zen Center, where he currently serves as the head monk.

You Have No Right to Say These Words

Bon Sun Sunim

Before I became a nun, I was a laywoman who was born in an Asian country and grew up in an Asian country. So my whole life-responsibility was clear. My first priority was to help my family. This is a normal and traditional role for Asian women. After I became a nun, it changed. Now my first responsibility is taking care of the temple and supporting the community. This is the life of a nun. If you ask me what are the difficulties of being a nun, actually some people have a romantic idea about it. They think, "Oh, I'm going to quit my job and shave my head, and I'm going to live in the mountains forever."

But if you really think this way, I have to remind you: Please make sure that you never ever hate any of your dharma brothers or sisters. You know why? Because you not only work with them all day long; you're also going

to sleep beside them, sit beside them and eat together with them, do everything with them, every day and every night. So never hate anybody close to you if you want to choose this path. It's really not easy.

There's another point. When we start to move from our family life to our community life, another difficulty appears. I think many of us have this experience. We used to tell our parents, "I don't care, it's my life." After you become a monastic, you have no right to say these words. What you need to learn is always to be aware of the needs of the community and what the temple needs. This is the temple culture and the monastic way. This is what we need to learn after we become a nun or a monk. Not for myself, but rather what the temple needs, what the community needs. That's really difficult to do, because when the temple way challenges "my way," this I-my-me will create lots of suffering inside, and imbalance and tears. But in the end, if we can digest all this experience and all these situations, we find that this actually helps our nun's life to mature. It helps our center to become stronger and our direction to become more clear in order to do our inside and outside job and to support the whole community. Thank you.

A Malaysian nun, Bon Sun Sunim began practicing in the Kwan Um School in Singapore in 1998. In 2002 she began haengja training at Mu Sang Sa Temple. In 2003 she ordained as a nun at Su Bong Sa Zen Monastery. Since then she has practiced and continued her nun's training in Hong Kong. During all these years she also often joined Kyol Che retreats at Mu-sangsa. Currently she is the head nun at Su Bong Sa in Hong Kong.

You Are No Longer One of Ours

Bo Haeng Sunim

A monk's life is not easy. The first time I tried and did not succeed. When I was a haengja, I did not come to the ordination ceremony at which I was supposed to become



Photo: Allan Matthews

a monk in Poland. Instead, I stayed in Lithuania. Later I tried again. I had a meeting with Zen Master Seung Sahn, and he gave me permission to try again. To make the decision to become a monk is very private. I didn't know what it meant, because I'd never been a monk before. I had seen Catholic monks in Lithuania. But when I saw Buddhist monks in the market outside the monastery, I would think, "Why is this monk outside the monastery? Monks must stay in the monastery." This was because in Catholic countries we usually never see monks outside. I know a Benedictine monk. He took precepts, left his previous life and went to the monastery, and he cannot go out. Like desert monks. I really believed, "Oh my God, if I become this kind of monk, my life is over."

But I went to Korea, and in 2001 I became a monk. My teacher, Dae Bong Sunim, gave me precepts, and I got the name Bo Haeng, meaning "Wide Action." It's



Photo: Allan Matthews

not a good name for me, because I don't know how wide my action is even now. At that time, when we bowed to Zen Master Seung Sahn after the ceremony, he said very sternly, "Why become a monk? This is very important. If you become a monk for yourself, it's better not to do this. Only to help people. This direction." We were happy and felt like celebrating. But I remember he spoke strongly to us, almost like shouting. Not like congratulations, but more like a warning. I remember his eyes and his speech, deep and enduring, as if it were yesterday. Afterward, I became the housemaster, and later the director, of Hwa Gye Sa International Zen Center. Later on I became the *ipsung* (head monk) at Mu Sang Sa Temple. And I've served in many other positions. Taking on these responsibilities is part of normal monastic life.

In 2004, I returned for the first time to Lithuania. All my friends already knew my circumstances. I had stayed in touch, and called them sometimes before I took

full precepts. “Hey, I want to come back to Lithuania. I don’t want to become a haengja,” and so on and on. But my friend just said, “No! Don’t come home to Lithuania until you become a monk. Don’t give up. Just do it!” That’s not what I wanted to hear, and so I went back to the mountains and cried for twenty minutes, “I want to go back to Lithuania.” I asked Dae Jin Sunim, my guiding teacher, “I am 40 years old. I went by myself to the mountain and cried. I don’t want to become a monk. I miss my Lithuanian friends.”

“How long did you cry for?” he asked. “Maybe 40 minutes.” “OK, next time, maybe 30. It’s normal.” That’s all he said.

It’s not easy. And when I finally went back to Lithuania, I met all my friends. The Lithuanian people already knew I had become a monk. It was in the newspapers and on TV. So when I returned, journalists were already there to cover it. All my friends came from school, and from the Russian army—from everywhere. And they all had something to say. So I gave a talk. I didn’t know what to say, so I made a slideshow about Korean temple life. Hwa Gye Sa’s big bell, the International Zen Center, and so on. I explained what a temple is, what Buddhism is, what our life was like. Many Catholic nuns came. And one priest. All these nuns were writing while I was talking. And then afterward, they came to me and said, “You know what you did? You are no longer one of ours. You think you are Buddhist, but you are not. Because you kind of lost your parents, lost your country and went to a different country, and now you come back. You better not come again.” That was my reception.

This really touched me. Because I thought I had done a good job. I only wanted to help people. But later I found out that when I first returned to Lithuania, many people had the same thing to say. “Yeah you’re a good man, but you’re not ours anymore. You gave a good talk, but you’re not one of ours.” Because Lithuania is 85 percent Catholic. And I was always in the newspapers. The story was always “That Buddhist monk this, that Buddhist monk that.” And people always seemed to have the same reaction. “Yeah, you’re very smart. Your talks may be good, but you’re no longer one of ours.” I was really upset. Afterward, I even changed what I wore. I put on black, like a Catholic priest, you know? I would go to the countryside, to many people, old country people, and we had many meetings. Sometimes 200 people would come. I would travel to meet with Catholic nuns. Nobody was receptive.

Then I went to visit a very very old Catholic priest, a really old friend of mine. Usually if you even become a yoga teacher in Lithuania, you’re out of the church. If you become a Buddhist, you’re really out. It’s really strong. If you feel like doing yoga, it’s better if you don’t. Without my friend the priest, I don’t know what I would have done. He went to the Sorbonne in Paris, and then

later became the abbot of an important temple. He’s a Dominican priest. I asked him, “Do you know what is going on here?” He told me, “Don’t worry.”

I said, “But yoga is not bad.”

He answered with a smile, “Yeah, yoga is very bad. So bad that I go to do it in the nighttime, so no one can see me.”

Finally, I went to see a very old monk. He is from France, but speaks Lithuanian. I could tell right away that he had strong feeling about all this. “No, you don’t like Christ . . .” And it went on from there.

I said, “I need permission from you, because I am helping people. Many people are interested in Buddhism; many people are interested in yoga; many people are interested in Hinduism. Many people, thousands in Lithuania. And you Christian monks are very good. But something is changing. I am here to help. Together. Not just myself.”

He clearly was not happy about this. So then I asked, “Are your monks’ lives easy from the very beginning?”

He smiled. “Don’t ask me this.” And he started talking, and we started talking together, about how hard it is to stay celibate. And his friend, a priest, joined the conversation, and one monk from America. We talked with each other like any monks talking together. I said, “I have 250 precepts.”

“Oh, too many. We have only three.” “How can you keep 250? We cannot keep three!” It really began from there.

Afterward, I did a kind of public relations tour. The next time journalists came. We all sat together and started talking about Lithuania, about our problems, about corruption, about money, about eating meat, about killing, about criminals. One monk and I decided to go together to visit a jail. At that time, I had groups in different jails, so the next time I went, he came along with me. We talked with them about apologizing for what they did. We discovered that like psychotherapy; he’s like a religious person, and we found we worked well together. We made a newsletter, and then some people started to believe in me. I went again and again, in, 2009, 2010, 2012. And then, when we would go into the countryside, people would no longer condemn me. Because everybody could see that I was together with the other monks.

After a while, things calmed down enough so that now I am making a Zen village in Lithuania, an ecological village. In Lithuania, we have 20 ecological villages. We do so to help prevent global warming. People on their own decided, “OK, I don’t want anything from the government.” They want to become independent and make this village. Now in this village we have a school where children can learn, because the village has some teachers. Not depending on the government, living on their own, not using too much electricity, not using the internet: there are 20 ecological villages, each with maybe 20 houses. I

was inspired, and so I decided to make this kind of Zen village, and we have a good place now.

But it happens slowly. And I need support. But people in Lithuania won't support you if you're not Catholic, because all the rich people are also Catholic. Now before coming here, we just had a big conference, with a prominent Christian monk, Krishna monk and myself. Almost 700 people came. We had strong interaction with the audience. Most of them, of course, use the internet and Facebook. So all of a sudden, we are getting support from social media. And to my surprise, one guy calls and says, "I can help."

So slowly, OK. This took from 2004 until now—13 years until people believed in me. I understood about this from watching Zen Master Seung Sahn. While I was in in Hwa Gye Sa Temple, when I stayed at Mu Sang Sa Temple, I made problems for my teachers—many, many problems. And now I see I kind of had it easy. Because of how monasteries are, I became the head monk. That's just the way it works, getting these positions. I wasn't very important, but had responsibility. When I went back to my country and people started believing in me, many people wrote me. I wrote a book, and people knew about me more and more. And I had this realization, "Wow, these people really believe."

I immediately changed my behavior. Changed my karma. This is the meaning of what Zen Master Seung Sahn told me: "You must help people." Because when people trust you, your behavior has to change. It's not easy. It doesn't happen quickly. But I changed. Now I see how I used to lie—to myself, to others. Now I cannot lie too much. I cannot behave like I did before. After telling everybody, "Lying is not good," I realize, "Oh my god! This means I cannot lie!"

If you talk to people like this, and they really trust you, then now they also check you everywhere you go. They look at what I do. They look at what I say. If I say, "Coffee is not good for you," and then I start drinking coffee, of course they will wonder. They'll say, "Hey! Yesterday you said coffee is not good. So why are you drinking coffee?"

Now that people believe me a little more, trust me a little more, they start teaching me. Now we are coming together. I already have many connections, maybe a thousand people who already know what I'm doing and help out. Arunas is also here today. He helped me a lot. These people have really already decided, "OK, I will help you." This really gives me faith. Now I understood how important a monk's life is—not alone, but together. Any time I have a question, I call Dae Bong Sunim and ask what can I do. Already I've performed maybe ten marriage ceremonies, a hundred baby ceremonies. Monks need support, more and more. It's not about money, just belief and trust and together action, in this country, which is not Buddhist.

Thank you very much.

Bo Haeng Sunim began Zen practice in 1989 and became a monk in 2001. Each year he participates in the summer and winter Kyol Che retreats at South Korean temples and at the head European Kwan Um Zen School temple in Warsaw. In addition, he leads Zen retreats in Lithuania. Bo Haeng Sunim has founded Zen groups in many cities. He also regularly meets with laypeople, visits prisoners, gives lectures at business conferences, and participates in TV and radio programs—all the while making Zen teaching more accessible.

The Monastery That You Have to Have Is Inside

Myong Hae Sunim JDPS

[Zen Master Jok Um asked, "I'm wondering if you've experienced the same kind of 'you don't belong here,' since you're both from Lithuania. I'm wondering how you experienced that and how you've coped with it."]

Well, actually, wearing the uniform, you kind of stand out anyway. I forget that I look different. It happens a lot when I go to Lithuania. I go to the bus station and suddenly everyone turns to look at me, and I just look back behind me wondering, "Is something happening?" So I do stand out in the gray monastic uniform. When I'm in Asia, because there are not so many white people wearing these clothes, again everybody will look at me and wonder why a white person would become a monastic. There are many times when people will treat you differently. So it's not necessarily that you don't belong here, but people kind of question what this is.

Zen Master Seung Sahn said, "Monastics are like a don't-know army", so that's what I am doing, and I'm very happy. I'm just giving 'don't know' to everybody! It's just like a big question: "Who are you?" It is very interesting. You see

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Photo: Allan Matthews

Are There Any Dangerous Animals on This Mountain?

Myong An Sunim JDPS

From a talk given at Providence Zen Center during the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference, on October 10, 2017

Twelve years ago we held a memorial ceremony for Zen Master Seung Sahn at Mu Sang Sa Temple. I did the head monk's job and had to give orientation for a short retreat we had right before the day of the ceremony. I walked into the dharma room and, lo and behold, sitting front and center were Zen Master Dae Kwan and Zen Master Soeng Hyang. I got a bit of a shock, thinking, "What do they

When I heard myself saying this, I thought, "What are you saying? Shut up! Stop talking!" But my mouth didn't stop, as if something smart would come out if it kept talking. I felt awkward, caught in a surreal moment of my own making, and I thought, "Oh god, what am I going to do?"

I looked at the two Zen masters, thinking, "They must think I'm an absolute idiot." But their faces were totally inscrutable. Then, I think I saw one of them nod and smile almost imperceptibly and I thought, "I'll take that as an OK."

I had completely forgotten about that incident until I was given this talk topic by Jan, "True Human Being." I thought, "What am I going to say? Can't he give me something easier to talk about?"

Perhaps my mouth had inadvertently uttered a truth that I had not acknowledged at that time. I recently read about the lion fish, which is now prevalent in the waters off Florida. It's a nonnative species, very beautiful, with

lots of horns and scales, but incredibly voracious. I don't know how it got there, but it has no natural predators and it eats all in its path. Very little survives in its wake. I thought, "Wow! That's pretty invasive."

However, compared to human beings, it comes in at a very poor second. We all originated from Africa. Not content to stay there, we spread out and colonized the whole planet. I don't think there is an inch of this earth that we haven't set foot on. In the process, we've decimated quite a few species. We have a pretty poor track record as being stewards of this planet.

I remember Zen Master Seung Sahn once said, "New building appear, then nature broken somewhere." In my hometown, we have beautiful small limestone hills and call the area *Siu Gwai Lum* in Cantonese, meaning they resem-

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Photo: Allan Matthews

need a meditation orientation for?" I felt a sense of rising panic and quietly told myself to breathe.

At that time, I was still a young monk, but nowadays I'd probably say, "Zen Masters, how wonderful of you to join us. Would you like to give the meditation instruction?" But I was quite unnerved by their presence and tried my best to get through the orientation. I said what I had to say and asked if there were any questions.

Out of the blue, a question came which really threw me. Someone asked, "Are there any dangerous animals on this mountain?" I thought and thought, "Dangerous animals?" While I was still thinking, my mouth decided to disassociate itself from my brain and it came out with, "Human beings!" And the tone of the answer sounded to me like, "Isn't it obvious?"

ble a small version of the Guilin landscape in China. That limestone is an important ingredient in high-grade Portland cement, which is much in demand. Nowadays when I visit, I see orange scars where the cement companies have blasted the hills. In the space of three years, one hill was gone. Fairly soon, there won't be any hills left to admire.

Our demand for economic growth is insatiable: more buildings, bigger cities and greater consumption. David Attenborough once said, "Anyone who believes in infinite growth on a finite planet is either a madman or an economist." My apologies to economists! And I don't think that we're all mad, but I feel that most of us are unaware of the implications of our actions for life on earth.

One question always comes back to me, "Why do we, such an intelligent, capable species with self-awareness, seem so unwilling or unable to save ourselves when we still have the time and the opportunity?" I just can't figure it out. There are minds greater than mine who may have an answer for this but I just come up with a complete don't-know. Why is it that we cannot take responsibility for the consequences of our own actions? Why can't we own our own shit? Don't know.

When I first started Zen practice in Hong Kong about 25 years ago, I remember one student asked Zen Master Su Bong a question. The student felt sad because there had recently been an earthquake and many people died. He asked, "Why did so many people have to die?" As a Zen newbie I was expecting Zen Master Su Bong to come up with a really compassionate answer but he replied, "It was correct, that there was an earthquake and the people died."

"What?" I felt winded when I heard it. He continued, "Cause and effect are very clear. When people hurt the earth, one day the result of their actions will appear." After I got over initial shock, I realized that it's true. We human beings tend to consider only ourselves, and assume that the earth with everything on it is here to serve us and us only. We slap Mother Nature around quite a lot. And we're surprised when Mother Nature slaps us back and says, "Hey! It's not personal, it's only business." When that happens, we think, "What's going on? Where did we go wrong?"

It's not that we don't try; we do, but maybe we just don't have enough information or we're not aware that we're headed in the wrong direction with Mother Nature. We usually intend that we'll leave this world a better place than when we first come into it, so that our children may have a better life than ours. But over these last five, six years or so, it seems pretty clear that if we continue without any changes and carry on with business as usual, it won't be like that.

I'd like to try a little experiment with all of you. You can close your eyes if you want. I'd like you to imagine a really bleak dystopian future. Not even a "Blade Runner" landscape's going to cut it. Just imagine how bleak it can be.

If we hit all our climate-change tipping points and get full-blown climate change, it's going to be worse than that, I think. I prefer not to be around to find out. It won't be anything that we have ever experienced. We will end up making the kind of planet for our children and our grandchildren where just trying to survive is the norm.

We're all in the same boat, like the Titanic. The developed countries are in the first class above deck, and we Malaysians, we're below deck. But when the ship goes down, the first class will go down just as fast as the lower classes. I guess that my only consolation is this: if we succeed in wiping ourselves out as a species, I'll be in pretty good company with all of you.

I'm sorry if it sounds pretty bleak. But before we all sink into the depths of despair, I think there's a beacon of light, of hope, from our young people. In Penang we have a growing number who are starting their own organic farms, who are very ecologically aware. They sell their produce in farmers markets twice a month. I know twice a month doesn't sound like a lot around here, but in Penang it's a pretty big deal. An increasing number of new young farmers are trying this way. They're not just chasing the money, and I think that's great.

Every time I go to the farmers market, I feel a little bit of pride, even though I'm not originally from Penang. I sometimes work with a couple who run home-farming workshops out of their own house to teach city folk how to grow their own vegetables on the balconies or on the porch. When I visit I usually give a short talk about climate change, conservation and saving water.

In Penang, we use the most water per household of all the states in Malaysia. Water is cheap—far too much so. Our Zen center's monthly water bill is five Malaysian ringgits, or one U.S. dollar. In my country the awareness of climate change is pretty low. Most people expect the government to take care of it, so that we don't have to make a personal effort. But I think these institutions can't be very effective. We have to get ourselves out of this mess. No one else will.

In Malaysia, HSBC Bank found that more than 50 percent of parents are willing to go into debt to fund their children's education. In addition, more than 80 percent are already using their current income to pay for their children's education. Not only are they using their current income, but they also want to borrow money to educate their children. Imagine what could be achieved if we could just redirect this energy.

Rather than act solely for their children's education, what if parents put their energies into ensuring a better, sustainable future for their children? Who could inspire them to do this? Politicians? Government bureaucrats? What do you think? How many people would be willing to travel hundreds of miles to listen to a prominent politician or civil servant? Usually they have to come to us, press our flesh every four years to get reelected. So, I think

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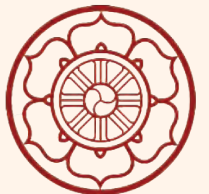
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they are not the people who will inspire us to act.

However, quite a lot of us here were willing to travel thousands of miles to listen to Zen Master Seung Sahn and to study with him. It's the same with the Dalai Lama or the Pope. When I was young, I thought nothing of getting my friends together and finding somebody who had a car so that we could drive a few hours to go to a concert and hear our favorite band—U2 or Springsteen.

I believe it's the spiritual leaders, the musicians, the artists, the poets, the filmmakers who can and will inspire us. Why is that? They speak to our hearts, not to our minds. I've seen Al Gore's first documentary. It was OK and informative. But I don't think it inspired or moved me as much as listening to Zen Master Seung Sahn, or other spiritual teachers or some music that I really connected with.

I think that all of you here are spiritual leaders. Some of you are also musicians, artists, poets, writers and filmmakers. If you step up to inspire others, I think we could do a lot to help our world situation. I don't have a nice neat answer to what it is to be true human beings, but I think it's up to us to reclaim our true human heritage by practicing the spiritual path.

You're probably not going to like what I am going to say next. One way we can start doing something simple now is to make changes with the meat that we eat. In 2006, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization published a report called "Livestock's Long Shadow." Following this,

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families with kids, and all of a sudden, a kid looks at you funny, tugging at her parent's sleeve and pointing a finger at me with a questioning face: "Who is that? What is this?" The kids already have don't know. And at the same time, other people will also have this question, "What is it?" Even if it's just for a short moment, they return to don't know. Or sometimes they might ask, "These clothes—are you a monk or what?" I get all these questions. So even today, coming from the hotel on the shuttle bus, the driver was just looking at me and at the Providence Zen Center address, and he said, "I've seen this place before. What are you doing here? What is meditation?" And you can see that he's thinking, "I have difficulties. Can it help me?" Maybe you will have a new person coming on Sunday. So because of the monastic uniform, these people would come to ask about their lives and in a way have a chance to meet the dharma.

I didn't go to churches and didn't face the challenges that Bo Haeng Sunim went through, but having this kind of experience of how people relate to me differently is not necessarily a feeling of not belonging. I hadn't been in Lithuania for a long time, so the situation there has changed a lot. I may not understand many things or know how to fit in. Even though I've been in Asia for a long time, I'm not really Asian, and I still do not completely understand Asian culture either. It's like I don't belong anywhere. I'm not Asian, but I'm in Asia. When I

Goodland and Anhang of the World Bank published a similar report in 2009. Both found that livestock farming is a huge contributor to global warming and greenhouse gases because ruminant animals like cattle fart and belch a lot.

What comes out of them is methane. It is about 80 times worse than CO2 for warming the climate. But methane doesn't last as long as CO2. It has a much shorter life span. So, if we could cut our meat and dairy consumption, it would make a pretty immediate impact. But it's something that we have to be willing to do.

A University of Cambridge study in 2014 found that the average efficiency of converting plant feed to meat is only 3 percent. If any of you ran a business at 3 percent efficiency, you wouldn't be in business very long. But we still insist on doing this.

If China and the rest of Asia and India start to eat like the West, I don't know what's going to happen. Many of us like our bacon, our cheese and our yogurt. However, if we can't adopt a plant-based diet 100 percent, why not try 80 percent? Try eating meat and dairy one day a week. And the rest of the time eat plant-based foods. We could try it this coming week—we've got great chefs serving up a great menu of vegetarian and vegan food. I don't think anybody's going to die from not having animal protein for a week.

So, finally, for our children and our children's children—all of those who will come after us—please let's just try to just do it. Thank you. ♦

go back to Lithuania, they'll call me a foreigner, because I have an accent now when I speak Lithuanian. I have an accent in every language I speak! I But what is my true self? What am I really? I am not Chinese; I am not Lithuanian; I am not any of these things. And at the same time I feel that actually I belong to everyone, to this whole world. It's starting to break boundaries. So in some ways you break the boundaries of "that's my country" or "that's my path" or "that's the group of people I belong to."

I am used to this monastic life, and practice is a little bit like a challenge. It challenges my own boundaries as well. As Bo Haeng Sunim said, he was told, "You have to stay in the monastery; don't go out." Well, after you practice, the monastery that you have to have is inside. But breaking the boundaries of what we are making, of what you are, boundaries of I-my-me. Having a strong inner monastery of don't know helps. Also everything is constantly changing. So you have to be with this don't know all the time. That's my challenge. ♦

Myong Hae Sunim JDPS is the first Buddhist nun from Lithuania, where she heard of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching for the first time in 1991. She moved to Hong Kong after becoming a nun in 1997 to train under Zen Master Dae Kwan. Myong Hae Sunim has served as head nun and vice abbot of Su Bong Zen Monastery in Hong Kong, where she now serves as the monastery's second guiding teacher.

What Is Most Important for All of You? The International Initiative

Kathy Park JDPSN

Presentation on the International Initiative given during the Whole World Is a Single Flower conference at Providence Zen Center, October 10, 2017

I'd like to quote one thing from our founding teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn. During a dharma talk he gave in Poland many years ago, when the Polish sangha was forming, he said, "Practicing by myself is no problem, but organization is very important. If we have strong organization, then our own center also becomes strong for each of us. Then helping each other and saving all beings is very easy."

I like that. It's very simple. First, I'd like to talk about our school for some of you who are new to it, and for some of us who may have forgotten, or for whom it's not clear.

The first thing I'd like to share are a few principles of our school. By *principles* I mean real tenets of our organization. The first principle is that the four practicing groups—monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen—practice together. That's the basic foundation of our Kwan Um School of Zen. The second principle is that we are bound by a teachers' compact that is signed by anyone who becomes a Ji Do Poep Sa, which also includes anyone who becomes a Zen master in our school. This is how we keep our teaching all together. The third is that we're unified in our teaching forms. Our school exists in many countries, but the bone of the teaching is unified, shared and constantly revised. Those are our principles, and with that, we have our added treasure, which is a wide, global network of Zen centers and sanghas all over the world.

You've seen or heard from many people these few days from the European sangha, the Asian sangha, and the sangha of the Americas—not only the United States but also Canada, South America and Central America. Our school is growing and reaching out, and that global network is rich with diversity, equality and mutual respect. Our global relationships are rooted in love, compassion and understanding, which come from our deep practice of don't know—the foundation that keeps us together. Like it or not we're a family.

In the last few days that I've been here, returning to Providence Zen Center and being at this conference, I feel a lot of love. I feel like I'm back with my family, and that's a wonderful feeling. I believe everybody feels that way. I was talking with Zen Master Soeng Hyang about how things feel smooth here at this conference and there's so much generosity, support and faith, as well as a lot of together action, which is at the heart of our teaching and a true treasure.

The International Initiative was founded about eighteen months ago, and there are a few things to clarify. Our school transformed over the years after Zen Master Seung Sahn passed away. Everybody knows he was a charismatic and strong leader, so we had this hierarchy that all of us followed, and it was wonderful. After he passed away, things transitioned and we had to grow up or grow out. Our sangha restructured loosely into three separate regions: Europe, Asia and North America, the latter of which is now the Americas. The three regions are governed by the respective regional teachers' groups. Overseeing them is the International Council, comprising the head Zen masters of the three regions and the school Zen master. The International Initiative came along in 2016, initiated by the head Zen master of our school, Zen Master Soeng Hyang, who envisioned a more visible global outreach of our practice and teaching. I thought Bo Haeng Sunim's sharing earlier was really interesting. [See the article "Don't-Know Army" in this issue. —Ed.] He said that when he returned to Lithuania as a young monk, he was an outsider in a Catholic country and was not easily accepted. He had to work step by step for some time to gain trust. I realized that for all of us regardless of our situation, condition or any practicing situation, following the path of truth is difficult. But difficulties are also our teachers. So how can we help each other?

The International Initiative functions along a guideline of decentralized, mutually beneficial collaboration and cooperation. Our working structure and communication is parallel among the regions by listening, sharing and coming to consensus together as much as possible. That's not always easy. Our main focus has been on outreach, not only to help spread the dharma, but also to find more resources, whatever they may be, and use them to support our growing practicing communities. I think our centers are already doing this to some extent wherever they are. What the International Initiative focuses on specifically is developing more ways to use media. The Kwan Um Online Sangha program is now running, and people from countries such as Denmark, the Philippines and Australia are signing up for membership and participating in regular online practice. This program specifically reaches people who are in difficult circumstances or are in remote areas too far from any local Kwan Um center.

The brand new international KUSZ website was just launched. In addition, many of us use various social media apps to stay connected. And International Initiative

(Continued on page 22)

Calling the Earth to Witness

Zen Master Jok Um (Ken Kessel)

Judge: Bailiff!
Call the next witness

Bailiff: Yes, your honor
Will the earth approach
The bench

Raise your . . .
Right . . .
Hand . . . ???

Do you swear
And if you don't
Why not?

Earth: Would it help?

Bailiff: Well maybe
If you did
People would listen

. . . Not so sure?
Would it hurt?

Earth: You don't want
To know

Bailiff: Mmm
See your point
But
Can't swear
You in
Unless you swear

Y'know
Can't testify
If you
Don't swear

Earth: Ahhh . . .
I do declare

Judge: Close enough
Now let's get
On with it

Name?

Earth: I'm your mother

Judge: My mother's
From Brooklyn

Earth: So you say
Brooklyn
Comes from where?

Judge: New York

Earth: New York
Comes from where?

Judge: America first!

Counselor
Your witness

Lawyer: Mother . . .
May I call you mother?

Earth: Yes dear

Lawyer: Mother
Where does it hurt?

Earth: You
Baby it hurts
When I look at you

And see
How you look
At what
You say you love

When all I
Can say is
This is love?

When I ask
You don't hear

So I cry
Floods

And I sigh
Storms

I'm your mother

What else
Would I do?

On Living in a Zen Center

Diego Villasenor

November 6, 2017

If you had mentioned to me three years ago that I would enjoy waking up before dawn to do bows and meditate, I likely would have called you a fool. Thankfully, I do not need to do so. Waking up before dawn to do bows and meditate is still a miserable time, even after several years of doing it. Yet it is one of several practices that I have committed to since moving into the Orlando Zen Center, and one that I have found quite useful. This article attempts to describe my experience living in a Zen center and why I remain here. What I can certainly say is that living in a Zen center is both one of the strangest and most ordinary experiences in my life thus far, especially considering that I live in an atypical Zen center.

There's a way in which Zen centers in the Kwan Um School have come to resemble the all-important temple-monastery in Korea. The Zen center, like the temple-monastery, provides first a place to live for those who wish to sincerely practice Zen. For those who do not inhabit the Zen center, it further provides a place to conduct Zen ceremonies and practice outside the commitment of living there. As opposed to the temple-monasteries in Korea, however, our Zen centers are predominantly inhabited by laypeople, who often conduct practice in the morning and evening and then leave for work during the day. They are often joined at practice by other members of the sangha who live elsewhere.

The Orlando Zen Center provides this same function, one that I have become quite familiar with in my several years of living here. We offer practice every single day in some form, and many individuals travel from across the city—and sometimes across the state for special retreats—to practice in this space. This is and always will be my predominant experience of the Orlando Zen Center: it is a space of practice.

Practice, in all its shapes—chanting, bowing, sitting, walking, and so on—can always seem strange. Weird things come up, parts of us that maybe we don't like, which we hide from or we push away. Other times, practice can be a relaxing experience, allowing the stressors of my days at the office to settle down. Yet more often than not, practice can feel like an inconvenience, taking up several hours of my day from things I think I would rather be doing. While others can go home, or avoid coming to practice if they do not live here, as someone who lives in a Zen Center I am committed to showing up for every practice as much as I am able.

If I had a nickel for every time I groaned on my way home from work in anticipation of setting up cushions, making the tea, and spending an hour to an hour and a half chanting and sitting instead of doing literally anything else, then I could pay off my student loans. This experience of encountering desire and aversion is key to Zen, and is one of the things that I have come to cherish about living here.

By designating the space as a place for Zen, and by providing a structure to it, I am forced to practice with the parts of me that don't want to do something. I am forced to sit quietly with my mind that would rather play video games or read, or go out to eat. I am forced to sit with the parts of me that find this whole thing, and myself, just weird, uncomfortable, and inconvenient. By doing so, I can gain some insight into the nature of my own aversion and desire, and the fundamental emptiness of it. Ultimately, I can try to get a little bit better at learning to live with that, rather than let it dictate my life.

I live here. This is what I call the “ordinary” experience of living here. As much as it is a place of practice, it is also my home. I have a room with a bed, and my clothes. I use the bathroom to shower and prepare to go to work. I cook and prepare meals in the kitchen (vegetarian of course). And yet, none of it is mine. I live here, yes, but as I live here people show up. Sometimes they show up in droves, sometimes just a few; sometimes expected, and sometimes not. These people show up, walk into the kitchen, use the same bathroom and so forth. It is a home in which people are always coming and going, practicing and chatting. It is a place where I reside and live, and it is all here for one purpose: to support Zen and the sangha who practice it. This too, is something I have come to appreciate. I am learning not only to live and put aside my own ego in the face of a structure and place of practice, but also to practice and welcome those who come up in the place where I live. I learn to take care of things not just for myself but for everyone. In short, the experience of living in a Zen center helps me learn to live with people, and helps me to learn to live *for* other people. It is one way of practicing the great question, “How can I help?”

This practice is not always easy. I am an introvert, and more so I am an easily irritated one. Ask any of my coworkers. People showing up can feel draining, especially when they are unexpected, and I often don't feel like I have the capacity of will to patiently, kindly and generously instruct

people and show them around. I recall one Monday evening when someone showed up thinking we had practice (we did not) and I found them standing in the middle of the dharma room as I walked out of the bathroom. Needless to say, I was uncomfortable.

By confronting me with these situations, living in a Zen center confronts me with the parts of me I find difficult to witness in many of the same ways that formal practice does. This, I think, is an experience typical for many who engage in communal practice—especially communal living—and is key to the purpose of a Zen center. The Zen center unites the ordinary experience of my life with the strange experience of consistent Zen practice, and the two interpenetrate on a level I have found to be profoundly eye opening but often uncomfortable. This is something that all of our sangha practices, and is something I continue to do as well.

Where my experience differs slightly from others', however, is that our Zen center is atypical. First, it is fairly small compared to others I have visited. The Orlando Zen Center contains a dharma room that can hold at most fifteen people, a tea room, a kitchen, a bathroom and two bedrooms. This means that at any given time, only two residents can inhabit the Zen center, as opposed to the several dozen living in larger Zen centers. Living with only two people, as opposed to a group of people, can limit the amount of "ego bumping" that comes from communal living. Rather than living communally, it is more so like having a housemate.

In my time of living here, I have lived with two other residents, both of whom have supported my practice and the Zen center, and both of whom have confronted me with aspects of myself—flaws I had never before noticed—that I had to learn to put aside in order to live harmoniously with others.

Zen Master Seung Sahn described how, in Korea, potatoes would be washed by putting them in a pot of water and stirring them with a stick so they all rub up against each other until the dirt came off. Likewise, living and practicing with other people in a Zen center, with egos and lifestyles bumping up against each other, can eventually reveal each person's true self, and also how to live with it. This is a beautiful experience that I cherish deeply. I cherish those who have lived with me in the Zen center, who have been my teachers, and showed me my flaws. Communal living in any Zen center is a strong practice, and it is something we offer here at the Orlando Zen Center. I would recommend this experience to anyone who has the time, ability and dedication to undertake it.



Photo: Scott Martin

I end with a quote by Shozan Jack Haubner, who describes the experience of communal practice better than I ever could:

I used to imagine that spiritual work was undertaken alone in a cave somewhere with prayer beads and a leather-bound religious tome, the holy one enwrapped in a mist of grace, mystique, and body odor. Nowadays, that sounds to me more like a vacation from spiritual work. Group monastic living has taught me that the people in your life don't get in the way of your spiritual practice; these people *are* your spiritual practice.

Through each other we discover that if we have the heart—the willingness, the strength, the courage—we have the capacity to plant the seeds of kindness, compassion, forgiveness, seeds of a laid-back humor, a sense of letting go. But your heart must be quicker than your mind. Trust me, that organ between your ears is always spoiling for a fight. Its job is to divide and conquer. But the real fight is taking place inside you, within the "dharma organ," the heart, where the challenge is to unify and understand, where the seeds of love and compassion are struggling to lay roots, to gain ground.*

To that, I can only say amen. ♦

Note

* From Shozan Jack Haubner, *Zen Confidential: Confessions of a Wayward Monk* (Boston: Shambhala, 2013), 169–70.

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(Continued from page 18)

continues to develop new ways to communicate and work together better, making room for creative growth to connect more with each other and the world. This conference is an example of how that is already being manifested.

We say Zen means understanding your true self: what am I? We are having this conference on ecology, on climate change and various things. What is most important for all of you? Is it on an individual, personal level? Is it at a local level where you live? Perhaps at your local Zen center level? Is that what's most important? Or is it on a national level that we are hurting the most? Or is it something on a global level? The state of the earth's ecology is undeniably telling us right now that the global situation is actually our responsibility. What is most needed right now? Somebody said some years ago that the most important thing needed was time. Today, I don't think it's time that's most important. What I've heard these few days in this conference—our foremost concerns, questions and ideas—point to only one thing: clarity. There's such lack of clarity in everything, and many people are confused and overwhelmed with information. The late Zen Master Wu Bong would say, "Let's look at the ecology of our own mind." What's really happening in our own mind? Can we become clear, digest our understanding and turn it into wisdom and clear action? All of us already have the seed of dharma light inside us, otherwise I don't think anybody would be here today. Zen is not an easy practice, but all of us have some taste of what it means to wake up. As Zen Master Seung Sahn said, when our own center is strong, helping others is easy. A clear mind supports a clear organization, and



Photo: Allan Matthews

vice versa. Let's make our center stronger together and our dharma light brighter, so that it shines further to more and more people and all beings as much as possible.

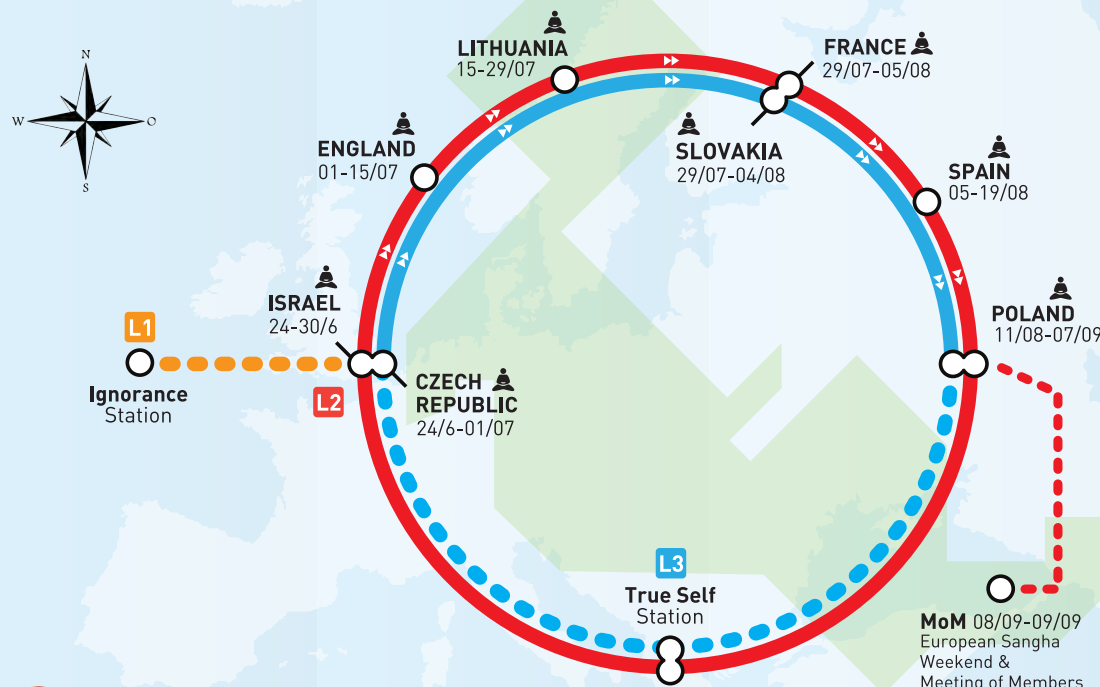
The International Initiative is a hub for the KUSZ to do outreach and support our ever-growing global practicing community. We work as a worldwide online team in areas such as administration, graphic design, technology, fundraising, visioning and much more. The initiative needs your support! To become part of the International Initiative, provide professional skills, volunteer your time or share ideas and feedback, please contact global@kwanumzen.org. Or visit the KUSZ international website at www.kwanumzen.org. You can join the Kwan Um Online Sangha (KUOS) at www.kwanumzen.org/online. To participate in KUSZ climate change projects, contact ecology@kwanumzen.org. ♦

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 - > Oleg Šuk JDPSN
- SPAIN** (2 weeks)
 - 1+2 > Bon Shim SSN
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Motivations for Practice

Scott Angilly

The world we live in provides a great source of motivations to practice. It's ironic that I'm Buddhist and want to have a career in politics. My intent is to use this practice to assist me with decision making. Whenever I'm faced with a problem or any other predicament at school I can always rely on practice to help me. It could be putting my hands in a mudra or chanting Kwan Seum Bosal in my head until I realize that it doesn't matter. The Kwan Seum Bosal chanting is being chanted not for me but for the people around me who are suffering far more than I am.

Politics is certainly something practice can help me with. I see the people in our conflicted government, and I see a great many people who are in pain and do not realize it. Everyone is suffering. It is not difficult to tell when politicians portray themselves as completely devoted to their parties, but they are human beings just like all of us. When walking in various cities one can see people who might find a small amount of practice life-changing. That is not to say that you must become a monk, go up into the mountains and attain enlightenment like the Buddha did.

Before I started practicing I thought of the Buddha as a guy with snails on his head and large ears—which is true, but since then I've begun to truly grasp his teachings. They've resonated with me quite a bit. I, like my father, have no religious background, and I don't find faith-based religions satisfying. Buddhism settled in quite well for me. All it took was one kong-an interview with no intent of starting any formal practice. Here I am now taking ten precepts at the age of 14 after having had the privilege of sitting 14 retreats with five different teachers of the Kwan Um School of Zen.

On these retreats my mind sometimes wanders and then I say to myself "Stop it!" Then I forget what I was just thinking about and then something else comes to mind. This has been something I've been working on, but luckily the wandering mind does go away after the first 30 to 45 minutes of any given practice day or retreat.

Yet another motivation is kong-an practice. Kong-ans are easily the most frustrating thing I've ever done. In school, when I'm asked a question it is so easy to come up with an answer. With kong-ans I do not get that same experience. My mind instinctively overthinks everything that comes into it. When I get the answer, I realize that it was there the whole time and I just couldn't put it in words at first. Or it had passed through my mind at one point and I hadn't noticed it. As frustrating as they are, kong-ans create a challenging motivation to continue my practice.

I will fully admit that I'm not as informed on formal teachings as I should be, but I've been making an effort to pay attention more closely to teachings rather than just the

forms, which I've always been better with than teachings. Now that I'm older it is easier to comprehend the teachings of our tradition. While typing this I've been watching various dharma talks by various Kwan Um teachers, along with some documentaries. These have given me some inspiration for my next reading selections during my free time.

The teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha now give me not just motivations for practice but motivations for going on with my life. Whenever I'm feeling down I can return to my practice and recognize that the problems I face do not matter. This world is full of hatred and bigotry, and through that, ignorance, anger and greed run in the streets every day and on every street. That is the driving force of my day-to-day, moment-to-moment practice.

My life's goal is hopefully to make the world a better place by making what I hope to be a difference. Saying I want to change the world sounds like quite the goal, but it isn't at all. Just a group of people practicing in a room changes the world for the better. At the New Haven Zen Center we usually get a decent-sized group of people, but it isn't usually a really huge group. However, it changes from 10 to 20 people from one Wednesday to the next. I am able to find the same practice by with a room full of ten people just easy as I can with a room full of twenty people. Our core practices will provide so much aid when I'm fully into my career as a politician or government official for the United States of America, a country so based upon greed, anger and ignorance.

Again, the world we live in provides a great source of motivations to practice. I haven't been shoved into taking five precepts and now ten precepts; I simply am doing it because I enjoy practice and care deeply about it. I see others suffering and say to myself that I want to save all beings from suffering, which is obviously exaggerated, but you get my point. Whenever someone sees someone my age practicing Buddhism in a dharma room they see it as some special event. But I get the same benefit from practice that everyone gets.

I can't wait until I'm older, so I can look back at my early years of practice to truly examine what an impact it will have had on me. I give most credit to my father, and the rest to everyone at the New Haven Zen Center. They have all helped to give me an excellent experience with Zen. There has never been one practice day or retreat that I haven't felt welcome. When I'm in the middle of my career I can remember all of them and the New Haven Zen Center and never forget my practice wherever I am.◆

Scott is 14 years old and lives with his parents in Meriden, Connecticut. He has practiced at the New Haven Zen Center since 2014.

Book Review

Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness

By The Cowherds
Oxford University Press, 2016
Review by Jess Row

In the translation of the Heart Sutra used by the Kwan Um School of Zen, Avalokiteśvara teaches us that in emptiness (that is, using the original term, *śūnyatā*) there is “no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path, no cognition, no attainment, and nothing to attain.” This is a line we repeat constantly in our practice, embodying the central view of the Mahāyāna, rooted in the Prajñāpāramitā sutras and the Madhyamaka śāstras (that is, philosophical texts), that emptiness, compassion and ethical conduct are all interrelated. The Zen tradition is full of (in some sense, is entirely made up of) stories where emptiness, compassion and correct action manifest all at once. But how exactly does this relationship work? In other words, how does emptiness manifest as compassion (as it does, sometimes) and why does it not *always* manifest this way?

These are questions Buddhist practitioners and scholars have wrestled with for centuries—essentially since the Mahāyāna began—and they continue as a lively subject of debate. *Moonpaths* is an anthology of essays by an international collective of scholars, primarily in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. (If they were coming from the Zen tradition, I imagine they would have named themselves “The Oxherds.”) They approach this question philosophically, using the language and terms Nāgārjuna uses in *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*), the foundation of the Madhyamaka tradition. If you’re not familiar at all with Nāgārjuna, this book may be a little difficult to navigate; I recommend picking up the highly accessible translation of *Fundamental Wisdom* by Jay Garfield, who is also a member of the Cowherds. But fundamentally—and somewhat surprisingly—*Moonpaths* is an accessible book that I think can help clarify some very tricky and easily misunderstood areas of Buddhist thought and practice.

In *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* Nāgārjuna teaches us that the reason the world we live in seems permanent, solid and full of independently existing entities—even though it’s not—is because there are two interdependent truths, the absolute and the relative, or “ultimate reality” and “conventional reality.” Conventional reality is where most human beings live their lives, convinced of the permanence and stability of objects, relationships and selves; of course, this is where suffering occurs, too, and where ethical action is necessary. A persistent problem in Mahāyāna Buddhist communities, and even societies (for example, among the Zen teachers in Japan who supported the imperial regime during World War II) is the attitude that because suffering is “merely conventional,” it doesn’t actually matter. Probably we have all struggled at some

point with this question ourselves. If we’re supposed to “put it all down,” then why and when should we take up the path of concrete ethical action, especially when that action is risky, difficult or not directly related to us?

One of the key texts that takes up this issue in the Mahāyāna tradition—and one of the focal points of *Moonpaths*—is the eighth chapter of Shāntideva’s classic *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, or the *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*. (There are excellent translations of this book available from the Dalai Lama and Pema Chödrön, among others). Shāntideva’s argument begins with a fundamental question: What does it mean to experience, in meditation, the realization that “I am the same as you, and my suffering is the same as yours?” One useful technique, he says, is to think of yourself and others as part of one body, where every part—the hands, the toenails, the eardrums—has to remain healthy for the whole to be healthy. Another is to consider that just as you are attached to your own suffering (as a conventional being) others are also attached to theirs. But in the final analysis, Shāntideva says, we have to give up our attachment to any idea of “I” and “you,” and accept that suffering simply appears, even without the existence of independent agents who suffer:

As the suffering self does not exist,
There are no distinctions among anyone.
Just because there is suffering, it is to be eliminated.
What is the point of discriminating here?
(*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 8.102)

Interpreting this passage, Jay Garfield says “Compassion is grounded in the awareness of our individually ephemeral joint participation in global life” and is “the direct result of a genuine appreciation of the essencelessness and interdependence of all sentient beings.”

Other chapters in *Moonpaths* that I found particularly meaningful deal with the vexed question of how karma works within the Madhyamaka view of impermanence. If our experience of the self is an illusion that arises moment-to-moment, and is always changing, how can we feel any certainty at all that actions actually have consequences, let alone a sense of karma’s influence on what passes from one life to another? Sonam Thakchöe, a Tibetan philosopher with both traditional Buddhist and Western training, does an excellent job of explaining two



answers to this question, one from Vasubandhu (who originated Yogācāra, or the “Mind-only” school), and the other from the Prasāngika-Mādhyamaka tradition (the basis of the Dalai Lama’s Gelugpa school). Vasubandhu argues, in effect, that because of the momentary arising and disappearing of mental states, there would be no such thing as karma if not for the *ālaya-vijñāna* or “storehouse-consciousness,” which exists permanently, across lifetimes, and contains karmic seeds that may bear fruit much later. The contrasting view, which originates with Candrakīrti, argues that karma does not disappear when momentary consciousness disappears; it “disintegrates,” and that disintegration is a separate moment unto itself, so that one state of consciousness is constantly influencing the next. Guy Newland, a philosopher and translator (responsible for translating Tsongkhapa’s mammoth *Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment*) provides a clear explanation of this second analysis in a chapter with the tongue-in-cheek title, “How Does Merely Conventional Karma Work?”

In the end I felt what was most lacking from this otherwise excellent anthology was any reference to actual

ethical situations or problems. This is not in any way a book about what philosophers call “applied” ethics, and as a Zen practitioner and nonphilosopher, I have a hard time understanding how anyone can bear talking about ethics in the abstract when the world is overflowing with concrete ethical dilemmas, large and small. Fortunately, there are plenty of other texts Zen students can turn to; I would start with Robert Aitken’s *The Path of Clover* and *The Morning Star*, and with Zen Master Seung Sahn’s wonderful “Letter to a Dictator” from *Wanting Enlightenment Is a Big Mistake*. *Moonpaths* is important because it provides a rigorous introduction to the wide and even beautiful Madhyamaka concept of ethics within an interdependent universe, but it remains to us to absorb these teachings into our moment-to-moment lives as students, teachers, parents, children, and ordinary nonspecial human beings. ♦

Jess Row is a dharma teacher at Chogye International Zen Center and the new books and culture editor of *Primary Point*. He’s a novelist and teaches writing at NYU and the College of New Jersey. His latest book, *White Flights*, a collection of essays about race and the American imagination, will be published in 2019.

Life is like a dream within a dream.
In our worldly encounters, who is who?
Before I was born, who am I?
After the last breath, what am I?



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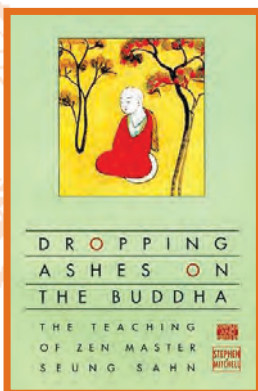


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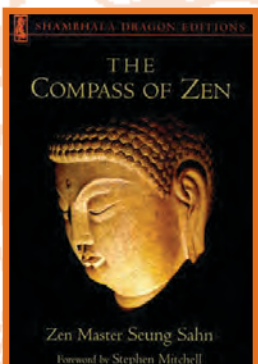
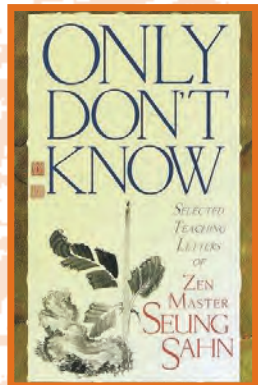
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Prison Groups

Arizona State Prison Florence
 East Unit
 Lowell Correctional Institution,
 Florida
 Lowell Annex, Florida
 Florida Women's Reception
 Center, Florida
 Northeast Correctional Center in
 Concord, Massachusetts
 Roslindale Pre-Release Center,
 Massachusetts
 MCI Shirley, Massachusetts



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The Kwan Um School of Zen

The heart of the Kwan Um School of Zen is our practice. Zen Master Seung Sahn very simply taught "Don't Know". This

means in each moment we open unconditionally to all that presents itself to us. By doing this, our innate wisdom and compassion will naturally breathe and flow into our lives.

The Zen centers of the Kwan Um School of Zen around the world offer training in Zen meditation through instruction, daily morning and evening meditation practice, public talks, teaching interviews, retreats, workshops, and community living. Our programs are open to anyone regardless of previous experience.

The School's purpose is to make this practice of Zen as accessible as possible. It is our wish to help human beings find their true direction and we vow and to save all beings from suffering.

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